



*Marian Sisters
of Santa Rosa*

Mater Dei Convent
400 Angela Dr.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403



Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa **Ex Corde Ecclesiae**

— ALL FOR JESUS, ALL THROUGH MARY —

FALL 2021

*O Mater Dei,
memento mei!*

Dearest Friends in Christ,

Laudetur Jesus Christus! Salve Regina!

We have been gratefully residing in Mater Dei Convent for about six months by the time this newsletter reaches you. The summer months have provided enough of a break from our apostolates for the Sisters to truly settle into this wonderful gift of a Convent home specifically designed for the flow of our life of prayer and self-sacrifice.

Our previous Convent was efficiently built on one acre, while Mater Dei Convent rests on more than 40 acres of land! This expansion has necessitated an increase in physical labor for each of the Sisters. As we strive to care for Our Lady's property, we have been able to deepen our appreciation for the blessing of manual labor, uniting with the labor of the Holy Family at Nazareth. Our time outdoors puts us in tangible proximity to God's creation, sharing the grounds with a variety of birds, jackrabbits, gophers, and trees. The graceful placement of Marian statues throughout the gardens reminds us to unite our hearts and minds to her Magnificat of praise to God.

The gift of Mater Dei Convent has required a great deal of trust in God's Providence, a providence which we often receive through the generous donations of friends like you. We are delighted to report as a result of your relationship of prayer and support with us that we have received five new Postulants in August. Each new member increases our ability to pray for you and to serve the mission of Christ's Church.

With deepest gratitude, I commend you to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Reverend Mother Teresa Christe MSSR

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Special Thanks

In addition to paying off the loan, there have been non-stop property improvement projects inside and outside the Convent. These have been possible through the dedication of friends who have gone above and beyond in making the place safe for the Sisters and a beautiful reflection of Our Lady's hospitality. Many of these projects have been funded anonymously, but we wish to give thanks publicly for the:

- Work parties to clean up Our Lady's Garden and put the pond system in service
- Beautiful privacy fence around Our Lady's Garden
- Countless hours of labor to clear and maintain the property for fire safety and aesthetics
- Maintenance advice and assistance
- Sponsor for the "living cost" of two Sisters



Upcoming Projects

- Establish security gates at the front and back of the convent (in progress)
- Obtain an emergency back-up power system
- Begin Chapel restoration
- Landscape grounds
- Build St. Joseph shrine
- Repair retaining wall
- Refurbish well and restore irrigation
- Build privacy fence/hedge between convent and schools





“I will allure her, I will draw her apart...”

In Pope St. John Paul II’s “Theology of the Body”, His Holiness speaks compellingly of how one can know the nature of manhood and womanhood by the revelation of that nature through the body. The design of the creature enables one to see its purpose, its dignity, and understand better the mind of the Maker.

This is also true of edifices, and rings especially true as regards the Convent building. The structure itself speaks eloquently of the life that is lived there. For example: the Sisters’ rooms are nearly identical in size — which is rather small — and accompanying amenities — which are few. The Chapel, however, is spacious and beautiful, adorned with statues and flowers. The common room — the primary location for recreation, study, and apostolate preparation — is larger than any individual Sister’s room, and formatted in such a way as to encourage communal sharing. The refectory — where the Sisters are nourished in body, through lovingly prepared meals, and soul, through edifying recordings or readings — speaks of order, in the tables arranged according to level of formation, yet also of convivial unity in all taking of the same nourishment from the same place. To gather these pieces, these elements

o f a truly conventual structure, indicate an aspect of our life. The order of operations is firstly, God; secondly, Community; lastly, Self. Here is a life of hierarchy and order, but all ordered toward Him, and so it breathes companionable charity.

Just as a Church, which is built with the architectural scaffolding that serves to direct the faithful towards the altar, the Eucharist, and the mysteries of the Faith, can serve as an efficacious aid to prayer and sanctification, so too does a convent, built with the principles of religious life in mind, aid the Sister in living her holy vocation. Everything, from her cell, to the Chapel, to the cloister walkway wherein she can prepare herself to meet her Beloved, speaks to the Religious’ heart. Here, she is home; here, life is for God alone. In transitioning from a temporary housing arrangement to a true convent building, we have been deeply blessed by the aid this “theology of the convent” has proved to be.



“I will lead her into the wilderness...”

Following the long tradition of the Church, manual labor forms an integral part of our consecrated life. In a spirit of poverty, as much as possible of the care and upkeep of Our Lady’s house is executed by the Sisters. In our short history, the Sisters in early formation have manfully shouldered this responsibility, maintaining our grounds, providing nourishing meals, keeping our clothing spotless, and caring for the Convent as though it were for Our Lord Himself (for it is!) under the guidance of their Mistress.



While the domestic arts remain the domain of the Novitiate, the increased size of the Convent and grounds has re-introduced the necessity of dedicated manual labor as common to all the Sisters. Each Sister (or team of Sisters) is responsible for an area inside the Convent and around the grounds, inspiring new reflections on the wisdom of the ages regarding the role of physical work in our way of life.

Our care for Our Lady’s property is an embodiment of both our poverty and our charity. Poverty necessitates work; our work is done for others (primarily for Another). Our labor does not accrue temporal wealth for our personal enjoyment; it is not done for self-gratification. In fact, we may not be very good at it, but we make our limited skills and resources our offering, an offering first made to Him Who gives meaning to everything we do, and then to our Sisters who immediately benefit from our labor.

“...I will speak to her heart.”

As we labor around the Convent grounds, we are visibly reminded that this land belongs to Our Mother. In agreement with St. Bernard’s sentiment that “of Mary there is never enough”, we have at least a dozen shrines dedicated to Our Lady outside. As we pull weeds and dig up the never-ending palm sprouts, we are prompted to unite our struggles with Our Redeemer’s great work, asking Our Lady to transform our mundane efforts into imperishable results for the salvation of souls.

This side of heaven, we will probably never be graced with knowing the results of the spiritual battles we join every day, but we can appreciate our Sisters’ temporal efforts to subdue the wildness and beautify the property. Manual labor produces an opportunity for the soul to be refreshed by God’s creation and brings its own sort of satisfaction, but this is exceeded by the joy we experience in sharing the fruits of each others’ labor. Knowing that the lovely flowers are the fruit of long toil with a stubborn stump gives an added savor to the appreciation of their beauty.



With Gratitude

Mater Dei Convent has been our home for six short months, yet it already feels (and looks more) like “home”. We were able to welcome our five new Sisters into a stable Convent with adequate space for our size. We extend our deepest gratitude to all of you who have made this possible. As you know, we entered into two loan agreements to purchase the property, one with the Diocese of Santa Rosa for \$250,000, and one privately for \$2,115,000. In April, we asked for your assistance in retiring the Diocesan loan and we are excited to report that it was paid in full in July. Thank you!

Now our attention turns to the private loan. Again, thanks to your support, we were able to make our first principal payment of \$100,000. Every bit counts! We know that many of you have been with us on this journey since our beginning — almost ten years! We warmly welcome our new friends, those we have never meet who responded to our need for a Convent. We pray that having met over our temporal needs, we will continue to build strong spiritual bonds, walking together to heaven. Whether long time friends or recent acquaintances, we give thanks for your friendship. Know that you are daily in our thoughts and prayers. Your contributions are the temporal foundation which allows our life of prayer and hidden sacrifice to flourish. Deo gratias!